



Bhagirathi



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Swamini Sadvidyananda Saraswati presents her lecture on Ahimsa (non-violence) in view of Gita. Professor Madhusudan Jhaveri was one of three UMD panelists who discussed Mahatma Gandhi's "Active Non-Violence."

Center for Indic Studies marks its third anniversary, and celebrates birthday of Gandhi with discussions and cultural program

The Center for Indic Studies marked its third anniversary, coinciding with the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, with a weeklong program of events last October.

Its first program featured a presentation on *Ahimsa (non-violence) in view of Gita* by Swamini Sadvidyananda Saraswati, with a panel discussion by three UMass Dartmouth professors on Gandhi's "Active Non-violence." A cultural program and light refreshments followed.

Activities also included a lecture by Ram Madhav, spokesman for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corp. India), on "Consequences of Gandhi and India's Partition." The following day brought to campus University of Maine Philosophy Professor Douglas Allen, who presented a seminar on "Mahatma Gandhi after 9/11: Terrorism, Violence, and the Other."

That evening, "Lagaan," a classical Hindi movie with English subtitles, was screened in the library's browsing area, as part of the Hindi language class which UMD Professor T. K. Roy is teaching for the Center.

Quotes from Gandhi:

"There cannot be happiness for any one of us, until it is won for all."

"No nation belongs to itself. Every nation belongs to the world."

"Rationalists are admirable beings. Rationalism is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence."

Upcoming Events

June 17-19
UMD campus

Conference on
Science & Art
of *Ayurveda*:
The Basis of
Life and Living

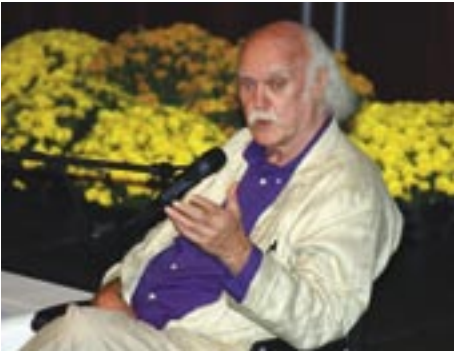
Ayurveda, the art of healthy living, enables harmony in daily life through self-knowledge (mind and body) and self-care (food and behavior). *Ayurveda*, an ancient medical practice from the Indian Sub-Continent, literally means "Knowledge of Life". *Ayurveda* is gaining remarkable popularity in the Western world, especially among people practicing yoga.

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Ram Dass speaks on aging

“**E**mbracing Aging, Changing, & Dying” was the topic when well-known Ram Dass delivered a special lecture on campus last fall. His appearance was co-sponsored by the university’s Ora M. DeJesus Gerontology Center.

Ram Dass—known as Richard Alpert prior to 1968, when he was a professor at Harvard—has authored several books of spiritual interest: *Be Here Now* (in its 37th printing by Crown Publishers), *The Only Dance There Is*, *Grist for the Mill*, *Journey of Awakening*, *Miracle of Love: Stories of Neem Karoli Baba*, *How Can I Help?*, *Compassion in Action: Setting Out on the Path of Service and Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing and Dying*. His book *One-Liners: A Mini-Manual for a Spiritual Life* was published in September, 2002, while in 2004, Harmony published his most recent work, *Paths to God: Living the Bhagavad Gita*.

While at Harvard, Ram Dass collaborated with Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Aldous Huxley, Allen Ginsberg, and others on intensive research with psychedelic chemicals. Because of that research’s controversial nature, Alpert was dismissed from Harvard in 1963. Four years later, he traveled to India, met guru Neem Karoli Baba, studied yoga and meditation, and took the name Ram Dass, “servant of God.”

Since 1968, he has pursued a variety of spiritual practices, including guru kripa; devotional yoga focused on the Hindu spiritual figure Hanuman; meditation in the Theravadin, Mahayana Tibetan, and Zen Buddhist schools; karma yoga; and Sufi and Jewish studies. Now in his 70s, and confined to a wheelchair after a stroke, Ram Dass brought a timely message about the realities of aging, illness, and death. His message was of a positive, hopeful, and pragmatic nature, and the audience appreciated his humorous yet wise stories and charismatic personality.



Demonstrating the structure of DNA through dance?

Last fall, a group of young women performed “Bharatnatyam,” one of the classical dances of India, in a novel presentation that linked this art form with a lesson on the structure and function of genes.

Eleven high school and college students have learned about the science of DNA through Professor Bal Ram Singh’s lectures. The girls have choreographed the DNA information into their dance steps with help from Ranjani Saigal, a computer scientist and Bharatnatyam dancer, and Kausalya Srinivasan, a dance teacher from India.

Dr. Steve Cohen of Tufts University’s Education Department also has been involved, by assessing the educational value of this teaching approach for high schoolers, particularly girls. The program,



Kausalya Srinivasan and Ranjani Saigal shared their respective knowledge of dance and science.

part of the Indic Center’s anniversary activities, was made possible with support from a UMass Dartmouth Public Service grant, Tufts University College of Citizenship, Center for Engineering Education Outreach, and Springstep, a non-profit group from Medford. The performance was well-received by the audience which included audience, which included UMD Chancellor Jean F. MacCormack.

The same group also performed at Tufts University last fall. The entertaining and educational program’s marriage of science and art has received considerable interest, and was featured in a *Boston Globe* article.

Indian Student Association celebrates ‘Deepostav’

With nearly 150 members, the Indian Student Association (ISA) has become a vibrant and growing club for UMass Dartmouth students.



ISA president Swapnil Chaudhari

The group partnered with the Center for Indic Studies to celebrate last November the important India festival known as *Deepotsav*, “festival of lights”. The ‘light’ symbolizes inner enlightenment as much as the visible brightness of many lamps. The evening featured songs,



Deepotsav celebrations afforded ISA students the opportunity to share their many talents as well as their cultural heritage through dance, fashion, and songs.

dance, a fashion show and patriotic parade, and was a night of enjoyment and camaraderie. It was an opportunity for the Indian Student Association to bring to life an aspect of the Indian culture, and showcase the many talents students have brought from their homeland.

The event attracted an audience of over 250. As always, the program ended with delicious Indian dishes, enjoyed by both the Indian and non-Indian guests.

Indian classical music: its origin and development

Avinash Maramraju, a graduate business student and a student of Indian music, traced the origin of music to the ancient scriptures of India during a seminar sponsored by the Center of Indic Studies last fall. He outlined the evolution of music, and its use in overcoming stress. He described how the origin of music can be linked with *sabdha brahma* (celestial acoustic), the holy Om. The readings of Vedas, he said, are set to a distinctive, soothing melody. Maramraju also talked about the “branching” of music into two major streams, “Hindustani” in the north and “Carnatic” in the south, and touched on India’s well-known musicians, past and present.



Avinash Maramraju

New minor in Indic Studies

As of last fall, UMass Dartmouth has a minor in Indic Studies. Professor Bal Ram Singh, Center for Indic Studies director, called establishment of the minor “a great beginning for the exposure of students to the only ancient civilization which has survived for thousands of years.

“Students will learn in a multi-faceted way, in classroom, seminar, and experiential settings. The goals set by the faculty for the Indic Studies Minor are: to disseminate understanding of issues relating to Indian arts, philosophy, culture, societal values, customs, etc; to promote international harmony through the mix of ancient and modern values; and to promote awareness among Americans and the world-at-large on contemporary India and its demographic diversity in the 21st century.”

The minor in Indic Studies was approved by the College and University Curriculum Committees in the spring of 2004. Dr. William Nelles, curriculum committee chair, congratulated the Center for “establishing a fine foundation for what promises to be a valuable program.”

The minor is designed for students interested in learning languages, civilization, science, art, culture, and philosophy practiced in the Indian Sub-Continent, as well as other contemporary subjects from Gandhi to Indian democracy.

In addition to Hindi (the language

of yoga), core courses include: Science of Kriyayoga, Indian Civilization, and Topic in Indic Studies. Elective courses include Asian Civilization, Introduction to World Music, and Introduction to International Relations.

Grammar of Indian Classical Dance

Dr. Vanita Shastri presented “Grammar of Indian Classical Dance” in a Center-sponsored seminar last December.

Dr. Shastri, who has a doctorate in political economy from Cornell University, is Executive Director of Meru Education Foundation, which offers programs on arts and culture of India to audiences in North America. A trained Indian classical dancer, she discussed the origins of dance in India, the theoretical and archeological bases of different dance forms, and its relationship to other art forms, especially sculpture and music. An overview of the techniques of dance movements that produce an aesthetic experience and the Rasa theory was demonstrated with slides. Dr. Shastri eloquently outlined the purpose of dance, and its role in linking the traditions of the performing arts of India.



Dr. Vanita Shastri



People of the world have fought in the name of religion from time immemorial. The history of the mankind is filled with much bloodshed and loss of human lives on account of such fights. The recent barbaric incident of 9/11 is one glaring example of such a fight. The day-to-day fight between Israel and Palestine, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Serbia, and many similar inhuman brutalities are mere manifestation of the same strife. We have seen tremendous genocide and human suffering in modern times all around the globe in the name of religion and fanaticism.

The question obviously rises: when will such fights stop, and will there ever be a time when we can live in peace and harmony? Here the teachings of Vedanta throws a searchlight: *Ekam Sat Vipra Vahudha Vadanti*—‘He who exists is one; the sages call Him variously.’ The great import of this thought is so powerful that if the humanity understood the es-

sence of this truth and practiced in life, all these petty fights and genocides will end for ever. Humanity will be elevated to a higher level of living in peace and harmony. Instead of the mutual hatred and distrust for each other there will be mutual respect and love.

We do not have to go that far in the ancient scriptures to dig for such pearls of wisdom. Just as recent as only a century and a half ago, there lived a man known as Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa in India. Born in 1836 in an obscure village of Bengal and illiterate for all practical purposes, he was an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment. His teachings used examples from day-to-day household life and yet carried the true wisdom of the *Vedas*. Here is an example of one of his teachings on the universality of all religions: “Someone has a green bottle, someone has a red one, while yet another has blue, they are all fighting about the color of the outside container, yet it’s the same crystal clear water inside these bottles.

“It’s the same with God, He is one and the same; no matter what religion

or faith, no matter what name, the true essence of all religions is same.” How simple and clear and how bold! How comforting and wonderfully unifying!

The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa’s carried the stamp of authority because it came from the lips of a true sage who had realized the ultimate truth by his *sadhana*. He went through the sixty four tantric yogas and accomplished self realization through each path. It may be mentioned here that to achieve self realization by tantric yogas, each one of these needs several lives of *sadhana* to attain perfection. He also practiced Christianity and Islam in their true forms and realized the same truth by these faiths. The modern world is yet to be exposed to the life and teachings of this great sage of India. It is only a matter of time, when the world will discover such great fountains of wisdom for its redemption. The world then, we hope, will be a lot better place to live.

We invite short articles (not to exceed 700 words) relating the wisdom of India to issues of current importance, from the members of CIS and readers of this newsletter.



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